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Learning That Doesn't Stick

By ROBERT LOWELL STEVENS

It has become something of a cliché to tell what an important and fearful task we have as teachers of English. But it has become a cliché because it is the truth. Eisenhower sat in somebody's English classes. So did the Mayo brothers. So did Senator McCarthy. We probably are teaching today young persons who must someday make up their minds whether they love America enough to die for it; all of our students must decide whether they love democracy enough to live for it, as responsible citizens.

When we think of the importance of our task, we want to find ways of teaching in such a manner that no student shall lose any part of what we teach. But when we think realistically, it is evident probably even to the best of us, that much of what we teach—maybe most of what we teach—somehow doesn't stick. After careful presentation, adequate review, relearning, review, more relearning, and more review—still it somehow seems to slip away.

I am especially aware of this phenomenon because I have had an opportunity to see, in a very disheartening way, this process of forgetting.

After teaching for a while in high school I began teaching incoming freshmen at the University of Illinois. For the first semester all was well. True, many students had much ignorance, but then it is easy to blame the teachers of a grade lower than the one you are teaching for the ignorance of your students. I'm afraid that I began

Mr. Stevens, now of the Department of English at the University of Illinois, formerly taught in the high school at Albion, Illinois. "Learning That Doesn't Stick" was originally presented as a talk before the English Teachers Club of Indianapolis.

blaming high school teachers for the condition of some of my students.

But then a terrible blow fell. I walked into the first session of my second semester class, and there sitting before me were several students that I had previously taught in high school. I was very happy at first. Surely these students would be different. I had tried to be very careful in teaching my high school classes. I wanted the learning to stick. But no. I received the same blank looks when I talked of sentence fragments, when I discussed faulty reasoning in certain newspaper articles, or when I tried to organize the first round-table discussion.

I had taught all these things. But much of my teaching hadn't stuck.

Today, I want to talk about certain areas in which results are often unsatisfying, and to show, at least in part, why the results are unsatisfying, and to give a few suggestions for improving instruction in those areas.

I am going to talk about certain very limited aspects of reading and writing. The suggestions I am going to give are specific and for that reason if for no other, also fragmentary.

When we talk about learning, we are talking about something that happens to students. And we are talking about students so amazingly alike and like us that we can usually understand them by truly understanding ourselves, yet so amazingly different from each other in a million little ways that they provide a continuous succession of surprises and challenges that make teaching the stimulating, if sometimes hectic, profession that it is. When I talk of learning's not sticking, I mean simply that the results achieved for the class as a whole have not justified the effort expended, not that the teaching has been valueless for all students, or that it has not been very valuable for some students.

We have in our classes Alec the near genius, William the near moron, and Alice who manages to make B's when she wants to. We have Cynthia the bright but homely girl from across the tracks and Margaret the beautiful, popular girl from Nob Hill. We have Warren whose only interest in life is Shropshire sheep, Lily who considers herself too tall, and George who plans to be a writer and is always writing cryptic comments on a little memo pad. These students and their teacher, who is probably developing a twitch in his left eye, and has a vague, half formed idea that he is being followed, form the kaleidoscopic pattern of the classroom experience. The generalizations I make about learning, the student, and the teacher are convenient, not descriptive.

Perhaps the most obvious area in which learning seems to be evanescent is that of serious reading, reading for information, critical reading. We know that if we teach students to evaluate what they read according to the facts rather than according to personal desires or preconceived opinions, the effects of that teaching should be apparent in the community after the students graduate into adult life. And we would be pessimistic to believe that our teaching has achieved no results in this way. However, let us look at some evidence that may indicate to what extent our teaching has succeeded.

Perhaps one of the best criteria for judging the ability of the adult to evaluate what he reads according to the facts is the omnipresent advertisement. An advertiser addresses himself to a reader in exactly those terms that he thinks are going to be most effective in selling his product. If the advertiser thinks that strict logic will sell his product, he will use strict logic. If he thinks that emotional appeals will work better, he will use emotional appeals. No scientific survey is necessary to demonstrate which method of appeal is more frequently used. A few examples will illustrate:

In a woman's magazine I find this advertisement (it is a cosmetic ad):

"Don't leave romance to chance . . . wear MIDNIGHT BY TUSSY. A fragrance can be as potent as a come-hither smile. And MIDNIGHT BY TUSSY is a scent that appeals to a gentleman's senses! This fabulous fragrance scents a whole series of lovely Tussy beauty aids. Try them and see if they don't make *you* feel romantic . . . and make men feel romantic towards *you*."

That was from one of the "better" magazines—a slick cover magazine. When we get into the pulps, anything goes.

Here is another ad, this one from *Best Western*:

"Want good luck? Love, wealth, happiness, may be yours. Carry the alleged Lucky Talisman of the Orient. Try this amazing charm for one week. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Send only one dollar today."

Now that's a bargain. If you don't have good luck, you get your money back.

Just one more. This one comes from an astrology magazine. It has my curiosity aroused.

"*Become a MENTAL SUPERMAN Overnight!* Yes, there IS an Easy Street to success! Get yourself a SPARE BRAIN in a matter of hours! Floor everybody! Positively no studying! Revolutionary 'MEMO-PROP' does all your thinking! It's un-

canny! *UNPRECEDENTED!* FULL MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE!"

Are these ads appealing to *our* students, that we have taught so carefully to be reasonable? Are advertisers appealing to persons whom they expect to use logic in making purchases?

In fairness I must say that once you get out of the pulps, and up into *Collier's* and *Newsweek*, many ads become almost sensible, and some become reasonable. But these silly ads are selling merchandise.

In politics also we see evidence that people respond readily to emotional appeals, even when those appeals are unreasonable. I don't feel the need to offer examples in politics—we have all observed national elections. But we all know, I think, that it is not lack of material that inhibits me.

It would be unfair and untrue to say that this evidence indicates the teacher to be wholly or even mostly to blame. As teachers, we are up against some formidable obstacles. Let's look at four of them.

First, why is it, for instance, that we make so little progress against unreasonable advertising?

It is, I think, that the advertiser, with his objective—to sell merchandise or service, is often ruthless. He chooses the path of least resistance, regardless of consequences. Usually he asks the reader to believe what he wants to believe anyhow. "Use this shaving lotion and you will become irresistible to women." In terms of his own wishes the reader has every motivation for believing the faulty reasoning of the advertiser, and no motivation for following the rules for straight thinking. To the hapless reader the advertiser presents an ideal world. The reader buys a ticket to this world when he purchases the advertiser's product. The reader no longer searches for the truth; he searches for the amulet that will remake truth according to his wishes. What reader doesn't want to be able to play Beethoven's *Appassionata* in ten easy lessons? What reader doesn't want to be alluring to the opposite sex? What reader doesn't want to have a beautiful skin and a pleasing personality? We teach rules for straight thinking and straight thinking tends to reveal the truth—but what if the truth is unpleasant? What if the truth hurts? Do you see what we're up against?

Secondly, as with advertisers, some of our politicians find it easier to promise full rearmament accompanied by an end to the draft, a national road building program, subsidies for farmers, slum clearance, pensions for everybody over thirty, and a drastic reduction in taxes, than to tell unpleasant truths.

Thirdly, we find certain widely read magazines, perhaps not actually indulging in faulty reasoning, but merely continuing to present only the most watered-down ideas, ideas so familiar and so simple and so thoroughly accepted that they seldom present any sort of challenge to the reader. One of the magazines, I think, is the *Reader's Digest*. It does have a good vocabulary testing section in the school edition. I've used the *Reader's Digest* in my own high school classes. But we should view that magazine as a stepping stone from *Best Western* to *Harper's* or the *Atlantic*.

Fourthly, in the classroom there are barriers to the free discussion of ideas. For instance, if you are in a small community, you don't want to discuss, say, inadequate working conditions, when you may offend some employer who feels that he is doing the best he can. Also, certain issues are rightly excluded by law from the curriculum and in any community the teacher may easily be accused of taking sides in political discussions. The result is that we discuss old ideas that are no longer vital and alive today. Students rightly fail to become enthusiastically interested in these petrified ideas. According to *English Language Arts*, "It is unrealistic to expect an item of linguistic skill or knowledge to be applied effectively in meeting a practical problem of human relations if its only development was in a barren situation that involved no real problems, no conflicting purposes, and no human beings." Ideas which, though valid, no longer involve real problems, are petrified ideas and of little interest to students. Such ideas as the sanctity of motherhood, the tyranny of taxation without representation, and the evils of child labor are, for our times, such petrified ideas. The trees in Arizona's petrified forest are pretty, but they haven't borne fruit in ten thousand years. E. J. McGrath says: "Now of course, teaching in which young people consider real problems often creates difficulties." We know that this is true. And I think that the teacher may be forgiven for staying away from some controversial topics. But others may and should be discussed.

I'm not making an invidious comparison. We have only to look at our situation in relation to that of the rest of the world to see that we've done a splendid job in preserving our freedom of speech, but I'm talking about the barriers that exist in our society that hinder straight thinking and thoughtful reading.

* * *

But there are some solutions, partial though they may be. Since we have been talking mainly of problems connected with advertising, let us talk first of solutions to some of these problems. If the student's failure to think straight was confined to his responses to

advertising, the problem would not be nearly so important as I believe it to be. As you know, however, advertising is one kind of propaganda. It is one thing for a person to be duped into buying a good luck charm and quite another for him to be duped into buying an idea that in light of reason seems undemocratic. But my point is that the phenomenal success of unreasonable advertising shows up a weakness in the education of many adults, a weakness indicating that many of us may be dangerously susceptible to other kinds of propaganda.

With advertisements, I think, part of the trouble is that students have never considered them critically. After all, they grew up with advertisements. As far as they know, this is the way things have always been and the way they should be. Sometimes, then, merely by analyzing some ridiculous ads in class we combat some of their illogic. Of course, mere analysis may not be completely effective in combating wishful thinking. Students, indeed all of us, tend to believe what we want to believe, and some advertising presents to us a sort of materialistic paradise. Ridicule may work here, however. Let students see how ridiculous these things really are. For instance, try this assignment:

Ask the student to imagine that a cousin of ours has come to visit from the remote mountainous regions of Tennessee. He has been so isolated that he has never listened to a radio quiz program, he has never read a magazine advertisement, he has never even explored refrigerators with Betty Furness on TV. In short, he is an uneducated savage. Let's say he comes to visit me. Here he is, an uncouth, rude, smelly mountaineer. I detest him on sight. But he has one quality that makes him unique. He has no reason not to believe implicitly everything he hears on the radio, sees on TV, or would read in the magazines if he could read. The first day with me he hears on the air about the international correspondence schools. The advertisement states (this is an actual ad, incidentally): "No matter what your handicaps or achievements . . . I.C.S. has a plan to fit your needs exactly. No matter how limited your previous education, the simply written, fully illustrated I.C.S. textbooks make it easy to learn." He insists that I help him fill out an order for a course entitled High-School Subjects. When the course comes he plunges into it, and because of his great faith all the claims of the ad come true for him. He finds that not only can he read the lessons, but that they are, as the ad said they would be, easy for him.

Then he reads an ad for shaving lotion, and after using the lotion, becomes as the ad says, irresistible to women. They flock around the house. He can't get away from them. But he is thor-

oughly disgusting to me. I decide to talk to him about his going home, but I have delayed too long. Unknown to me he has subscribed to a series of lessons on muscle building, and, in just nine days, he has developed muscles that amaze me, that overawe me, that make me decide to hold my tongue. But things go from bad to worse. He learns how to play Beethoven's *Appassionata* in ten easy lessons. He develops a voice so resonant that it breaks the cut glass in the cupboard. He triples his earning power by raising mushrooms in our basement. But just as I feel that I can't stand him any longer, I find that I am beginning to like him. Almost against my will, I find that his personality has a dynamic attraction for me, and that his argument that I should take him into my business is convincing me. Of course, I then discover that he has purchased and read the book by Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Well, give your students the problem of describing what might happen to a person for whom the ads all came literally true. Have them illustrate their stories with actual quotations from ads. They'll have fun, and they'll have their eyes opened to the ridiculousness of some advertising.

* * *

In politics, if issues can be found for discussion that affect the student and will not at the same time alienate a segment of the local population, speeches about these should be discussed in class. Right now, the most important such issue is universal military training and the draft. Other issues concern lowering the voting age, political attacks upon teen-age drivers, calls for movie or book censorship, or speeches concerning juvenile delinquency. The main thing is to make the ideas seem vital to the students, and all of us know that that is very difficult and that some students just can't be shown that politics is any of their business. Unfortunately, it is these students who are the real danger to democracy. It isn't the divergent opinion that is undemocratic; it is the vacant stare. What I am driving at is that we shouldn't lead political discussions in our classes—we should foment them.

* * *

In reading for pleasure, also, we find ample evidence that much of our teaching doesn't stick. I am not going to quote again the statistics showing what percentage of American soldiers prefer comic books to Shakespeare's comedies or trash to tragedies. Nor am I going to repeat the figures that demonstrate how much more we spend on liquor than literature. You know from the *English*

Language Arts that we spend more money every year on Christmas cards than on books. It is only necessary to glance at the magazine racks of a news stand to determine what portion is devoted to magazines such as *Best Western*, *True Confessions*, *Real Love*, *The Astrology Forecast*, *True Detective*, and *Pin-up Parade*, in comparison with the proportion devoted to such magazines as the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *Time*. If other evidence of the kind of reading we do is needed, we may note the things we have in common as evidenced by our conversations. Gone are the days when an acquaintance with such persons as Ophelia, Sir Lancelot, Becky Sharp, Jean Valjean, or even Martin Arrowsmith can be assumed, though we can assume universal acquaintance with Daisy May, Dagwood, Uncle Walt, or Steve Canyon.

But here too there are complicating factors outside the classroom. In the nineteenth century the novels that we call today the better literature had not nearly so much competition from what we would today call trash. True, there were the penny novels, and they achieved a surprising circulation. But take a look at any news stand today. Many news stands have a whole special section for that favorite of favorites, the comic book. And while a magazine like the *Atlantic* may have a monthly circulation of 200,000, the various comic books have a circulation of more than 1,500,000, not per month, but per day! But this isn't all. Every person who reads a newspaper can follow the day to day adventures of his favorite comic character.

I don't want to be misunderstood about this. I am not advocating a campaign against comic books. This new form of communication—the picture that actually helps the story to progress may well someday have its geniuses who will create for comic books a real and authentic literature. I suspect that the reason we haven't had them before is simply that we haven't had the technical means of producing the pictures. Why the artist should not avail himself of any means at his disposal for conveying his meaning to the reader I don't know. But today's comic books are for the most part our enemies rather than our friends, because they take the time of the student and make him satisfied with cheat literature that stimulates him sexually or appeals to his sadistic impulses rather than stimulating his esthetic impulses. Even so, in *Prince Valiant* or *Pogo* there are glimmerings of what the medium may someday produce.

Next to the comics at the news stand are the slick paper magazines. The slick magazines depend upon mass audiences for their profit. The greater the audience the greater the profit from the advertising contained in the magazine. Therefore the editor must

publish the kind of stories and articles that are going to lure the reader into his pages and keep him there for a while. Unfortunately, it seems easier to do this by presenting sexual orgies camouflaged and bowdlerized in such a way that they aren't even banned in Boston, and nearly anyone may read them without consciously realizing just what it is in them that appeals to him. Such reading usually appeals to the worst in us, but we don't realize this consciously because evil is always punished and virtue is always rewarded. But oh the goings on in these stories before the punishment or the reward!

Readers of this cheat literature soon find their senses dulled to better material, and no matter how much the teacher stresses the values of the good literature she finds that she is constantly fighting a losing battle. Try convincing a dope fiend that he should switch to Sanka.

In seeking solutions to this problem, let us not feel that we have failed if we do not achieve our whole goal, for we shall not fail entirely. We have gained something if we convert a *True Confessions* reader into a *Saturday Evening Post* reader. And then though we fail to lead everybody to what we call good literature, maybe we can lead somebody, so let us not face the problem of solutions entirely pessimistically.

On this subject let me say first that we can't get students to appreciate literature they can't understand. And it's really surprising what simple ideas and allusions some students can't understand. For instance, I still remember the high school sophomore who thought that battering rams were sheep trained for battle!

What would that student think of this quote from O. Henry's *Municipal Report*, which appears in a high school anthology: "As I rounded the corner nearest my hotel the Afrite coachman of the polychromatic, nonpareil coat seized me, swung open the dungeony door of his peripatetic sarcophagus, flirted his feather duster and began his ritual: 'Step right in, boss.'"

What a strange thing a polychromatic, nonpareil coat must be to this imaginative youngster, or, a peripatetic sarcophagus. A peripatetic sarcophagus! Now we're asking students to read this difficult material, not only now as class assignments, but later during their leisure time. If they are to tackle the difficulties, they must be convinced that the rewards are worth the struggle.

As J. N. Hook has said in his book *The Teaching of High School English*, it isn't a good idea to use one approach constantly in teaching literature, but I'd like to suggest an approach that you may find profitable to use occasionally. I suggest that you concen-

trate during one period or unit of study, a six weeks' period say, on a few poems that are likely to be considered worthwhile from the student's point of view. Long before you present a poem, make a list of the difficult words from that poem and present them to the students in other contexts. Maybe it will take three or four weeks to get all the words introduced incidentally in other materials. But you can find some of the same words in prose selections, some in newspaper articles you may discuss with the students; you can plant some words in the assignments that you give them; and perhaps you will just have to give them some of the words directly. Then test them on the words. Make sure that most of the students understand most of the words. At the same time introduce incidentally other information that the students will find essential in understanding the poem. For instance, if you have a poem referring to past wars, you may want to show incidentally how Waterloo grew out of the French Revolution that Dickens portrayed in *A Tale of Two Cities*. You can remind them of another war that is the subject of Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* or Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, and you can portray the First World War with its Verdun by *All Quiet on the Western Front* or Alvin York's autobiography. During all this time the students feel that the assignments you are working on are justification enough for learning the information you are giving them. Then assign the poems.

Imagine the student's pleasure at reading with understanding such a poem as this familiar one by Carl Sandburg:

GRASS

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.

Shovel them under and let me work—

I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg

And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.

Shovel them under and let me work.

Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:

What place is this?

Where are we now?

I am the grass.

Let me work.

Here the student sees familiar names. And he is thinking about familiar events. The poem itself will not always be remembered as an obstacle which was or was not conquered. And perhaps because

it did not involve pain it may be remembered with some pleasure. This is assuming that the poem really had something to say to the student and that the teacher goes ahead using all the skill at her command to get the meaning of the poem and the beauty of the poem across to the student.

This same procedure is especially adaptable to the lower grades. Of course, you will choose selections from children's poets like Longfellow and Stevenson. I know a fourth grade teacher who has tried this. It works. If you do this, you are going to have to concentrate your main attention on fewer poems or prose selections than you may have taught previously. You will study others and read others, but you especially want these few selections to be understood and appreciated by the student. Such a procedure may mean that you will ignore many poems that you have taught previously, but, in my opinion, the achievement may be worth the sacrifice.

Let us remember in selecting our poems or prose writings that many students will be left cold by some very meaningful and beautiful material just because they have not yet had the experience necessary to appreciate it. I have found in teaching veterans and eighteen-year-olds in the same class that the veterans often responded more satisfactorily than the younger students for this very reason. I remember a college freshman girl who had gone to high school in this country after having her mother and father shot before her eyes in Germany. Some of our students have known grief in the form of broken homes or error in personal conduct. And then there are the giddy, frivolous sophomore girls, apparently innocent of serious thought of any kind on any subject. Chronological age is seldom an accurate criterion for determining whether a student is ready for a particular poetic selection.

* * *

In writing too there is plenty of evidence that learning doesn't stick. In fact, there is so much evidence that there seems no need to review it. Rather, let us talk about complicating factors, and solutions.

In addition to the complicating factors that I have mentioned in connection with other points of this talk we have here again complications in the classroom itself. I think that often too much time is spent on the nonfunctional aspects of grammar and too little on writing. It would be fine if every student could identify every part of speech in the most complicated sentence. But time is at a premium. Let's teach mainly the aspects of grammar that will help the student become a better writer.

All right, assume that we have created more time for writing. How are we going to spend this time?

On the grade school level a Bright-Idea Box may be placed somewhere in the home room. Pupils can be encouraged to drop into the box little original poems, jokes, tall tales, essays, short stories, book reviews during the week. On Friday there can be a box-opening ceremony at which the teacher will read the bright ideas. Students and teacher can criticize them—or just appreciate them. Authors may or may not want to remain anonymous.

For the better grade school or high school student the school paper is an outlet for writing, as is the letters to the editor column of the local paper. In one of my college classes I asked each of my students to write, some time during the semester, a letter to the editor suggesting a solution to some local problem. Every student but one had a letter published. Naturally, this sort of thing can make enemies of editors if it is used too often. But most students are stimulated by seeing their work in print. Informational reports may be prepared for the student council, certain teachers, or various town groups. There are writing jobs on the school annual. Too often, however, the mediocre writer finds these outlets closed to him. Therefore, let me list at random a few suggestions for stimulating the poor writer:

1. Motivate him through his hobby or special interest. There must be information that he would like to have about his hobby. Ask him to write letters requesting information; help him to revise them; and urge him to send them. I once had such a high school student write to coach Ray Eliot of Illinois. He was happy to receive a reply from the busy Mr. Eliot. The student received needed information about his hobby, six-man football, and he gained respect from his classmates; he had corresponded with a person they regarded as a sort of celebrity. Later, the student may be encouraged to contribute to a permanent file that you may keep on interesting hobbies. The file can be open to all students and may be a source of information they will value. Call it the permanent hobby-file and keep it in the library. For the lower grades the hobby file may become a hobby show. Writing invitations to the show, notices on the show, speeches of explanation to visitors to the show provide the experience in communication. (Of course, the whole class contributes, but the poor writer especially finds satisfaction here, for the letter goes to understanding parents. And the talk requires no spelling or punctuation excellences.)

2. Through arrangements with other teachers help the poor student write assignments for other courses. Perhaps the geography

teacher needs a class report on farming in Yakutsk, Siberia. The geography teacher can cooperate in directing his research, you can help him write up his material in an interesting way, and he can read his paper, not to your class, but to the geography class. Later a better student may want to write a summary of the report for the school paper. I'm not, I hope, seeming to ask you to bar the poor student from the school paper. I'm just accepting the fact that the poor student seldom crashes the school paper. If, through skillful teaching, you help him crash it, that of course is all to the good.

3. Publish, perhaps in mimeographed form, a bi-weekly or monthly book review magazine. Students may contribute short reviews of books they have read during the month. This review will help everybody select his reading. Copies can be made available in the library. You or better students can help the poor students revise their reviews into acceptable form.

Even with these suggested projects and with the several projects that you can add to them, the poor student may still be left with time that should be devoted to serious writing. In that case, I'd say, revert to the old formal theme, even if it means assigning him a topic that doesn't arise out of his own experience. Extrinsically motivated writing is better than no writing at all.

The last point that I want to discuss is writing for pleasure. We don't see much of that today in high school except among the best students, and if I have neglected them in this talk I am sorry, for they are my first love. Too often we tend to neglect our leaders of tomorrow. But the very best student often reads so easily and writes so well that we, having spent much time accomplishing little with the poorer students, are quite overawed and willing to let well enough alone. However, for a minute or two let us consider our pride and joy.

After he has turned in his A themes, contributed to the book review monthly, and done all the other various writing assignments, he usually has time left on his hands. If we aren't careful, he will spend this time dreaming through literature that is too easy for him or otherwise waste his time while he develops poor study habits.

Let's put him to work! Help him and his fortunate brothers to compose the poetry annual. This annual may be a class project, or even a state project as it is in Illinois. In Illinois the *English Bulletin* devotes two whole issues to some of the best high school writing in the state. Some of the poems submitted have a serious intent. Others are just good fun. Here is an example of a poem from the latter category:

RAIN

The boy stepped bravely into the street.
 No rubbers had he upon his feet ;
 He had no umbrella, not even a coat,
 Tho upon his good health this fellow did dote.
 But why should he be softly complaining?
 He didn't get wet!
 It wasn't raining!

Winnie Tucker, Bloomington H.S., '53
 Effie Sutton, teacher.

Maybe if you are in a big school, or if you are especially resourceful, you can produce a book set up in print and clothed in a hard cover, or maybe yours will be mimeographed.

If the student is really good, badger him into collaborating with his brothers on a class play. He'll be fascinated by radio once he has heard a script of his used. And who knows, maybe he is good enough to interest a group of parents in a serious and ambitious book review. Encourage him to collect rejection slips from magazines. But don't tell him he should be publishing in the *Atlantic Monthly*. He shouldn't! But because of you, maybe he will some day, or maybe he will conduct a poetry corner for the *Podunk Gazette*. But the *Podunk Gazette* needs a poetry corner!

Even here I can't desert the poor student. Sometimes the nearly illiterate students have remarkably good and vivid ideas. Here is an example. The poem is the work of a tenth-grade student who had trouble getting the simplest assignments. We would have called him dull. Certainly the poem shows that he could not spell. But it has virtues that overshadow bad spelling.

CLOUDS

I saw the clouds last nihgt in the sky,
 Paked close together like people on a street,
 Looking about for somethnig yet nothing
 At all. Waiting and wating for something
 Yet nothing at all. Then all of a suddin
 The rain came down, huge bukets
 Of water poring thier strenght on all
 The world. How like you and I
 They are, these clouds in god's great sky!
 Seemingly not knowing what to do and
 Then of a suddin making the desision
 Poring out all strengthe that life may be better,
 But sometimes destroying the good they have done before.

When the magazine *The Clearing House* first printed the poem, the statement was made, "With the spelling and grammatical errors corrected it might easily be passed off as an unpublished poem of Carl Sandburg." I like this too. And it gives me new heart to challenge all students to unlock their minds and to use all their resources for clear thinking and effective expression. Our modern world needs the best that is in all of us.

I have tried to show why results in English instruction aren't always as lasting as we might expect them to be. I have discussed only written communication: reading and writing, with reference to the double ideal of beauty and meaning. We have seen that cheat literature steals the student's time and that the hucksters and the spell-binders too often sell him a bill of goods. But obstacles are to be conquered—we *must* make learning stick; the stakes are high. For better or for worse, what our students think tomorrow will shape the world.

BEST HIGH SCHOOL POETRY AND PROSE OF 1953

It has become traditional for the January and February issues of the *Bulletin* to be devoted to some of the best poetry and prose written by Illinois high school students during the preceding year. Once more that tradition will be followed. The prose will be chosen again this year by Miss Margaret Newman of Elgin, and the poetry will be selected by Miss Paulene Yates of Maine Township High School. Entries may be sent to J. N. Hook, 121 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, and will be forwarded to these two judges.

Please observe the following regulations:

1. Since students are interested chiefly in writing by those still in school, only in exceptional cases should papers by members of the class of 1953 be submitted. Papers written by both junior high school and senior high school students may be sent, and the class of the writers will be considered in making the selections.

2. No more than ten poems or five pieces of prose should be submitted by any one teacher (unless, of course, the selections are in a school magazine which is sent complete).

3. Each group of manuscripts should be accompanied by a statement from the teacher saying that to the best of his knowledge each paper is original.

4. The name of the writer, the name of his high school, the year of his graduation, and the name of his teacher should be plainly indicated *at the bottom* of each manuscript. Please follow this form:

JOHN JONES, Exville H.S., '55
Mary Smith, teacher.

5. The deadline for all manuscripts is December 20, 1953. Earlier submission will help the judges.

6. No manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by an addressed envelope with first-class postage attached. All manuscripts except printed matter must be sent first class.

GOING TO LOS ANGELES?

As you know, the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English will be held this Thanksgiving at the Hotel Statler in Los Angeles. If you're going, be sure to come around to the booth of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, the only affiliate which regularly has an exhibit at Council meetings. But be careful! You're likely to be pressed into service. We need more helpers at the booth.

If you can't make it to far-off California this year, start planning now for a much closer convention in 1954. Detroit will be the host city at that time.

The Minutes of the Fall Meeting of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

The Illinois Association of Teachers of English executive board met Friday, October 2, 1953, at nine o'clock in the evening in Room 211 of the Illini Union Building.

The meeting was called to order by the president, Miss Alice Grant. The secretary, Mrs. Maude Hopper, read the minutes of the March meeting which was held in Chicago. The minutes were approved by the board. The treasurer, Dr. Charles Roberts, made the following report:

Balance on hand, October 3, 1952	\$1646.39
Total Income 1952-1953	2650.12
Assets	\$4296.51
Total expenses	3149.53
Balance on hand	1146.98
In editor's account	186.90
Total balance, October 3, 1953	\$1333.88

Upon motion by Miss Hoover and seconded by Miss Anderson, the treasurer's report was accepted.

Mr. Lamar called on each of the district leaders present who in turn reported the following activities in their areas:

Miss Margaret Adams reported a spring breakfast in DeKalb.

Phylita Shinneman, speaking for Miss Barbara Garst, reported a Tri-city English group which meets three times a year.

Miss Alice Grant is planning a luncheon during the I.E.A. meetings.

Miss Laura Springer reported a dinner meeting.

Miss Hila Stone told of an English group meeting during the I.E.A. meetings.

Miss Mary Miller has a county meeting every year.

Miss Isabel Hoover reported a successful meeting in Galesburg.

Miss Margaret Newman extended an invitation to the executive board and members to attend the March meeting of the English Club of Greater Chicago.

Miss Liesette McHarry, chairman of the Curriculum Committee, gave the following report concerning the book list revision project:

Twenty-five schools have cooperated.

Every book has been identified by a member.

1093 books are on the lists.

The annotations are those of the students.

A motion was made by Miss Anderson and seconded by Dr. Roberts that money be allowed for clerical work needed by the Curriculum Committee. Motion carried.

Dr. Hook reported that the theme grading project has had an enthusiastic response. There are only 500 copies left. Orders from every state plus Alaska and Hawaii have been received.

Miss Lois Dilley, I.C.P. (Illinois Curriculum Program) representative, reported 3 projects for the Committee:

1. To improve citizenship by providing consultant help.
2. To inform teachers about economics.
3. To form a committee to visit teacher-training classes.

Miss Anderson presented some changes that had been suggested by the Constitution Committee. Discussion by the group brought forth many helpful suggestions. The Committee is planning further study and is hoping to present some modifications at the spring meeting.

Dr. J. N. Hook presented the report of the Teacher Load Committee. Mr. Wilmer Lamar, seconded by Dr. Charles Willard, made the motion that the Association go on record as favoring 100 pupil hours per day maximum load for the English teacher. That the minimum preparation for certification of English teachers be 24 hours exclusive of the freshman rhetoric course or its equivalent. Motion carried.

Miss Mina Terry, Chairman of the Nominations Committee, presented the following slate of officers for 1953-1954:

President—Mr. Wilmer Lamar, Decatur

Vice-President—Dr. Charles Willard, Southern Illinois University

Secretary—Miss Florence A. Cook, Shabbona

Treasurer—Dr. Charles Roberts, University of Illinois

Program Committee—

Miss Helen Stapp, Decatur

Miss Margaret Adams, Sycamore

Miss Barbara Garst, Moline

Mrs. Tressa Bennett, Kansas

Library-English Committee—Miss Alice Grant, West Frankfort

Editor of *Bulletin*—Dr. J. N. Hook, University of Illinois

Assistant Editor—Miss Margaret Newman, Elgin

Public Relations—Miss Mary Miller, Danville

Curriculum Chairman—Miss Liesette McHarry, University of Illinois

Chairman of Committee on Committees—Miss Hazel Anderson, Galesburg

Directors at the National Council of Teachers of English meeting in Los Angeles during Thanksgiving will be Dr. Charles Willard, Mr. Wilmer Lamar, and Miss Alice Grant.

A motion was made by Dr. Willard and seconded by Mr. Lamar that expenses for the fall conference be granted. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned upon motion made by Dr. Willard and seconded by Mr. Lamar.

HAZEL ANDERSON

Secretary Pro Tem

The general business meeting of the Illinois Association of the Teachers of English convened at eleven-fifteen o'clock on Saturday, October 3, 1953, at the Illini Union Building in Urbana, Illinois.

The meeting was called to order by the president, Miss Alice Grant. The secretary's minutes were read and approved. The treasurer reported a balance of \$1333.88. (See executive board minutes for the detailed report). Dr. Roberts, seconded by Miss Margaret Newman, made the motion that the treasurer's report be accepted. The motion carried.

Miss Mina Terry, chairman of the nominations committee, presented the slate of officers for 1953-1954. (See executive board minutes.)

Miss Terry, seconded by Miss Bach, made the motion that the recommendations of the nominating committee be accepted. The motion carried.

Dr. Hook explained the teacher-load project and the recommendations of the committee. Mr. Wilmer Lamar, seconded by Dr. Charles Willard, moved that the Association go on record as favoring 100 pupil hours per day maximum load for the English teacher. That the minimum preparation for certification of English teachers be 24 hours exclusive of the freshman rhetoric course or its equivalent. Motion carried.

Mr. Lamar moved that the secretary be instructed to write notes

of appreciation to Mr. Fulk of the Extension Division, the College of Education, and the Department of English. The motion was properly seconded and carried.

Miss Newman announced the March 20th meeting of the English teachers of Greater Chicago.

An announcement was made concerning the annual meeting of the National Council of the Teachers of English in Los Angeles during the Thanksgiving vacation.

The meeting adjourned.


Respectfully submitted,
MAUDE E. HOPPER, Secretary

FLORENCE A. COOK, 1953-1954 Secretary

IF YOU HAVE NOT RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP

This is the last issue of the *Bulletin* that can be sent to those members of the Association who have not yet renewed their membership for 1953-54. No one will want to miss the new edition of *Books We Like*, with titles of approximately 1,000 books selected and annotated by Illinois high school students; or a controversial article by Claude M. Fuess, former headmaster of Phillips Andover Academy in Massachusetts; or other articles that promise to help make this another good year for your *Bulletin* and your Association.

You may use the coupons on the back page for your renewal.



PUZZLED ABOUT CHRISTMAS GIFTS?

The bound volume of Illinois Authors, with the literary map of Illinois tucked away in a pocket, makes an excellent Christmas gift, say the teachers who gave it last year. The regular price is \$2.50, but I.A.T.E. members may order as many copies as they wish at \$1.00 each. Use the form below.

Please send _____ copies of the bound volume of *Illinois Authors* to _____

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Name _____

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To C. W. ROBERTS
204-A Lincoln Hall
Urbana, Illinois

I am paying \$2.00 annual membership dues to the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. This also pays for a year's subscription to the Bulletin.

Name _____

Address _____